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"PROTECTION OF THE FRONTIERS OF THE USSR", by Colonel Kisil

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I. The General Organization of the Border Forces of the USSR

In the USSR the borders are protected by the MVD (Ministerstvo Vnutrennykh Del) and the guard duties are being carried out by special military troops assigned for this purpose. They are divided into two formations, independent of each other, but related by the nature of their duties and subordination. One of them is called: the Internal Troops of the MVD (Voyska Vnutrennoy Sluzhby/MVD); and the second: the Frontier Troops of the MVD (Voyska Pogranichnoy Sluzhby/MVD).¹ Detachments of these formations are subordinate to the main military command if they are operating in a theater of military operations during wartime.

As a rule, the cadres of the military formations of the MVD are specially selected men from among the contingents of the annual draft. Their selection is based on their being devoted Communists and reliable as to Soviet political purity and on their loyalty to the Soviet government. Such a selective process supplies the military formations and the military schools of the MVD with 80-90 percent of members of the Party and the Komsomol. In this way the MVD provides for the strength of authority in such sensitive areas as the border and the frontier zone.

The Internal Troops of the MVD (Voyzka Vnutrenney Sluzhby MVD) are located and operate in the frontier zone. Their tasks are: a) protection of important military installations; b) protection of strategic bridges, important railroad junctions and stations, and sea and river ports and water canals of military importance; c) protection of prisons and convoy of prisoners; d) control on trains and on sea and river transports; and

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e) protection of the members of the Soviet government and various representatives of the government who are traveling all over the USSR with important tasks of a controlling and propaganda nature; in these cases the functionaries of protection may wear civilian clothes. These troops differ from other troops of the USSR in their uniform: the cap and collar tabs are red (dark raspberry) in color.

The Border Troops of the MVD are on special assignment. They are located along the border zone and their duties are the direct protection of the border. Their tasks consist of: a) preventing border crossings by unauthorized persons from neighboring countries as well as from the inside of the Soviet territory, b) preventing smuggling, c) reconnaissance action on the territory of neighboring countries and the preventing of such action by neighboring countries on Soviet territory, and d) in case of war, providing armed opposition to an invading enemy until the arrival of border field troops.

The local detachments of these two military formations of the MVD, related by the nature of their duties, maintain a steady, vivid, and technical contact among themselves and cooperate very closely in carrying out their guard duties. Their cooperation is coordinated on the spot by the political apparatus of the MVD.

In the following chapters we shall pay attention to the organization and operational structure of the troops of border services, because that is really the theme of our article.

II. The Internal Organization of the Border Troops of the MVD

The Border troops of the MVD (Voyska Pogranichnoy Sluzhby MVD) are organized according to the following scheme:

- a. The border detachments (Pogranichniye Otryady)
- b. The border komendaturas (Pogranichniye Komendatury).
- c. The border outposts (Pogranichniye Zastavy)

We shall now discuss what each of the above-mentioned units means in the general organizational scheme.

The Border Detachment (Otryad): the highest tactical-operational and economic border unit. It may be compared, as to the services position, to a separate brigade of Soviet infantry. Depending on importance of the post, the border otryad commander is an officer with either the rank of major general, colonel, or lieutenant colonel. He has all the authority of a brigade commander. He has a staff with the following departments:

- a. For carrying on operational work after learning about the frontier population along the whole sector of the otryad.
- b. For training contingents of draftees before incorporation into lower posts (komendaturas and zastavas) and training cadres of the lower commanding authority (sergeants and corporals).
- c. For training military dogs, according to the plans of the staffs of border zastavas.
- d. For organizing and carrying out reconnaissance (intelligence), both inside and outside the frontier zone, on the territory of the neighboring country. It should be added that this department is a center for intelligence planning and the issuance of proper directives to the border komendaturas and border zastavas.

At the staff level of the otryad there is, as a constituent part, an economic (supply) apparatus, which deals with supplying food and money

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for the personnel of the otryad and, in addition, supplies the border zastavas with arms, uniforms, and other military equipment from their stocks. Besides, the border otryad has a political apparatus of its own, which travels from time to time to the border komendaturas and the border zastavas to carry out political and operational work.

The border otryad staff headquarters is usually located in a big city or in another heavily populated spot situated in the center of the otryad sector at the very border line or within the frontier zone.

The border otryad is usually named for the name of the place where the headquarters is located.

The Border Komendatura: subordinate to the staff of the border otryad. It is an executive body which concentrates the direct command of the border zastavas. The number of border komendaturas in the border otryad depends on the size of the sector. Their location is usually at major populated spots, on or not far from the border line or within the frontier zone, and they are compulsory on important roads or directions which go from the neighboring country across the border into Soviet territory.

Depending on the importance of the post, the commander of a border komendatura is an officer with either the rank of colonel, lieutenant colonel, or major. He has all the authority of a regimental commander. There are suitable executive staff personnel (officers, NCOs, and soldiers) with the border komendatura, as well as specially assigned cooperation-agents of the MVD. In addition, the commander of the border komendatura has at his disposal secret agents who do intelligence work in populated areas.

A discussion of the particular structure of a border otryad staff and the subordinate border komendaturas will be the subject of another article.

The Border Outpost (Zastava): the highest executive unit of the border otryad, and it is directly subordinate to the border komendatura. The number of border zastavas subordinate to a border komendatura is like the number of komendaturas in an otryad; it depends on the length and importance of the border sector.

The border zastavas are situated eight to ten km from one another.

The length of the border sector belonging to a zastava depends on the character of the terrain of the neighboring country, and the number of zastava personnel depends on the length of the sector. If the terrain of the neighboring country is easily approached on foot or by driving, the sector of the border zastava is shorter, and the number of personnel greater. And, vice versa, where the terrain of the neighboring country is difficult to approach and where it is easy for far and deep observation from some points of the border belt (impassable swamps or wide water spaces) the sector of the border zastava is longer and the number of personnel smaller.

The border zastava with the least number of personnel is similar to the half company (Polurota) of the Soviet infantry. Its staff is approximately as follows:

- a. The zastava commander (senior lieutenant or lieutenant) with the authority of a company commander - one.
- b. Assistant to the zastava commander (lieutenant) - one.
- c. Adjutant (? - bunchzhnie; bunchuk = mace of a hetman, or standard bearer) - one.

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- d. Supply officer (senior sergeant or sergeant) - one.
- e. Junior officers (? - noncommissioned officers) (sergeants) - three or four.
- f. Soldiers (frontier guards) - forty.
- g. Horses (saddle and train) - ten.
- h. Military dogs - three to five.
- i. Armament of the soldiers: 40 rifles, 200 hand grenades, and 2 submachine guns.

The border zastava with a great (normal) number of personnel is nearly twice as large.

Above is the internal organization of the Frontier Troops of the MVD.

III. The Training and Education of Officers for the Frontier Troops of the MVD

The training and education of officers for the frontier services of the MVD is carried out in specially designated military schools (Voyennoye Uchilishche). There, except for indispensable military subjects, special pressure is imposed upon the students to get acquainted with: a) history of the Communist Party, b) history of the struggle and the deeds of Lenin and Stalin in regard to the strengthening of Bolshevik tactics in carrying out the world revolution and all its secrets, and c) the Bolshevik way of uncovering and catching so-called "counter-revolutionists".

Special attention is paid to basic military training. Any MVD officer should know how to shoot perfectly his personal pistol, as well as the rifle and machine gun.

The military school, on the basis of instructions received from the political apparatus of the MVD, assigns the students beforehand to specific frontiers. Therefore, every student while still in school already knows to what frontier he will be attached (Turkish, Romanian, Chinese, etc.) after graduating from the school as an officer and where he will start his career. Therefore, the student should become well acquainted with compulsory subjects and learn: a) the geographical situation of the neighboring country whose frontiers he will guard; its history, resources, industry, economic conditions, and the structural conditions in that country - the cities, towns, and villages, particularly those which are situated within the frontier area; b) the organization and the tactics of the army, and the historic particulars and special national changes of the people against whom he has to protect the Soviet frontiers; and c) the language of the people or the peoples who are living in this country.

Such information is supplied the students so that, in executing their duties and in examining arrested foreigners, they learn the characteristics and are able to distinguish between a smuggler and a spy and on the basis of their own opinion to report the case to their superiors. The foreign language is necessary to enable them to converse with the frontier guards of the neighboring state while solving misunderstandings and incidents which might occur at the frontier.

Every student, after graduating from the school and after having received the rank of an officer, starts his military career at a border otryad as an assistant to the commander of a border zastava. In this position he is obliged to become acquainted with the population of the area to such an extent that he knows every house and even the names of all the inhabitants. That knowledge appears to be one of the main prerequisites for receiving

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a good efficiency rating, which is given every year, and for being assigned to the position of commander of a border zastava, if such time comes. Here it should be added that only a convinced Communist may be appointed to the position of a border zastava commander.

Assignments to higher positions and promotions to higher officer ranks come very slowly in comparison with the officers of other services. That is because the responsible positions at the frontier are entrusted to officers only after a long and careful examination of their personal qualities by superior commanders and by the political apparatus of the MVD in all stages. All of this is explained with the phrase "good of the service for the Soviet government."

IV. The Training and Education of Soldiers for the Border Service of the MVD

The term of service for soldiers in the Border Troops of the MVD is for three years. In the event of tension in the international political situation, that term may be extended for six to eight months by a special order of the supreme military command.

Besides political and Communist reliability which is a necessary requirement for selection for service with the MVD, the candidates' physical condition plays a major role, i.e., good health, perfect sight and hearing, and the physical ability to endure various climatic conditions. A draftee who meets all of these requirements may be certain that he will be selected for service with the Border Troops of the MVD. Therefore, going to the Voenkomat he receives, in his place of residence, written recommendations from the raion public organs or from the oblast Party or Komsomol committees. The draftee accepted for service with the Border Troops on the basis of these recommendations is assigned to a proper border otryad. There he belongs to a training battalion or company (rota) and is trained and educated during the first year of his service. The draftee as a young guard soldat is drilled, takes gunnery training (rifle, machine gun, hand grenades, and grenade launcher), and combat training. The training takes place during various seasons, during the day and at night, and under various climatic conditions (fog, rain, snow, and frost). At the same time he is given political education.

During the training and political education the young guard soldier is carefully watched by political officers and is taught Soviet "patriotism" (faithfulness to the Soviet government, ability to protect the "Soviet fatherland"), accuracy, discipline, and his individual shortcomings are uncovered.

After one year of training the young guard soldier is sworn in for faithful duty for the Soviet government and is then assigned to one of the border zastavas, where he serves two more years.

It should be noted that Communist idealists and the Komsomols are assigned to zastavas which are on important crossings. The soldiers who are less able or those who showed an immoral character during the year are sent to border zastavas of less importance or are utilized in the headquarters of the otryad for internal duties (trains, etc.). At the border zastava the newcomer is assigned to one of the older soldiers who is about to finish his three-year term of service. Every day he teaches his "Red-Army serf" practical frontier duties, and once or twice a week he gives him written tests and trains him in night service.

The Border Troops of the MVD have a rule that the watch sentries are always carried out by two men together: in the field service the "chasovoy and podchasov" exists - here there is always one older and one younger guard on duty. Officially, it is explained that a young guard is afraid to stand sentry at night by himself; in reality, however,

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the reason for this is the distrust of the young guard and the fear of the command that the young guard may let a foreign agent cross the border. Negligence in this respect is considered as an extraordinary event and a great crime. For this the commander of the zastava is court-martialed by the MVD and with him the sentries who did not see the crossing of the border by a foreign agent from the out-or inside.

V. The Organization of the Protecting Service in the Sector of the Border Zastava

We already know from the internal organization of the Border Troops of the MVD that the border zastavas are not equal as to the number of personnel as well as to the length of the frontier sectors. This indicates that the distribution of manpower is not routine but is adapted to the real needs of the terrain and eventualities. Such utilization of manpower provides a great opportunity for initiative by the commander of the border zastava and for excessive zeal after duty hours. According to the Soviet method, the border line is considered more or less as a defense line and therefore the parallel sector of the terrain which joins the border is divided into:

- a) the forward portion of the frontier zone, called the First Line, and
- b) the rear portion of the frontier zone, called the Second Line or simply the rear. These lines are separated by roads which parallel the frontier and connect populated points or by the nearest natural or artificial terrain obstacles which are situated along the frontier and cover entry from the border into the frontier zone.

In those places along the frontier where important military installations are situated just on the border and the width of the border extends from 100 to 500 meters, the rear edge of the frontier extends accordingly to the rear of the frontier zone.

For better observation the terrain in front of the border is cleared (trees and bushes are felled and the grass is cut). Sometimes the grass is not cut but then a MZP (malozametnoye prepyatatviye) is installed - that is, a criss-cross network of very thin wire which can ensnare a border crosser. While attempting to extricate himself from the wire, he is discovered and is arrested by the guards. For the eventuality of enemy action from the neighboring state and for defense of the border zastava, military trenches are prepared along the frontier.

Direct protection of the frontier is carried out by:

- a. Sentries placed at proper intervals along the border at certain terrain features which provide excellent possibilities for observation of the border and the sector or segment of the frontier zone assigned to the sentries. The sentries are armed with rifles and hand grenades for self-defense and with binoculars for observation.
- b. Secret observers along the border in those places which cannot be properly watched by the sentries.
- c. Moving patrols along the border, particularly at night or during bad climatic conditions (fog, rain, or snow) which make the observation of the border difficult for the sentries.

Indirect protection of the frontier is carried out by:

- a. Single stationary patrols who stand or lie along the rear portion of the frontier zone in places hidden from the eyes of the population or in special hiding places from where they are able to watch the assigned sector of the terrain or direction and can leave the place unnoticed to arrest a border crosser in time and at the hour defined by intelligence.

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- b. Single moving patrols who walk in a covered space in an attempt to make any penetration of the frontier from the border into the frontier zone impossible, as well as any attempt to approach the border with the intention of choosing the proper moment for crossing it.
- c. Patrols in pairs who, particularly at night, patrol the main roads in the rear of the frontier zone which lead to the border or those parallel to it, and search or, in case of need, stop automobiles and horsedrawn carts.
- d. Night patrols with military dogs, placed in important areas and in concealed places.
- e. Secret observers in pairs who are placed in covered places or in special hiding places close to major bridges and road crossings.

The suspected persons are stopped after they are very close to the secret observers by an energetic outcry: "Stop, who goes?" (Stoi, kto idet?). During the winter they wear fur coats. Sometimes they have dogs with them.

In the event of an alert the pair of secret observers strengthen their observation and actively support other functionaries in the arrest of violators (smugglers or agents), if they managed to cross the border and find themselves close to the secret observers.

Carrying out duties in connection with the direct or indirect protection of the frontier is fulfilled according to a plan personally drawn up by the commander of the border zastava and announced to subordinates one week ahead in the so-called Schedule of Daily Duties.

The rotation of soldiers for guard duty is handled in such a fashion that every guard has: a) one day and one night on duty, b) one day and one night rest, and c) one day and one night training and education according to the training plan (rifle practice, regulations of frontier duties, and political education).

During the one day and night on duty the sentry carries out his duties at two places and is changed from one sentry post to another in succession. Thus, after a period of time he has served at all the sentry posts in the sector of the zastava. The official purpose is to make the sentry well acquainted with all sentry posts and in case of an alert signal to make him recognize promptly where the signal came from. The real purpose, however, is distrust of the guards, because one can orient himself in the area by means of sight and the alert signals adopted by the Soviet frontier service require orientation by hearing.

The alert signals given by the sentries are usually by gunshot. One shot is a warning signal and three shots indicate a major incident at the sentry post.

The reaction to these alert signals by the border zastava is as follows:

- a. At one shot - all sentries, patrols, and secret observers strengthen their observation in the direction the signal came from, and from the headquarters of the zastava a messenger on horseback is sent along the border to find out which sentry gave the signal and the reason for the signal.
- b. At three shots - all sentries, patrols, and secret observers do the same thing as with the one-shot signal and from the zastava headquarters the commander of the border zastava, together with proper personnel, goes on horseback to ascertain the reason for and attempt to control the situation which brought about the alert.

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In both cases the direction of signal is given by sentries who are posted along the border.

The headquarters always maintains saddled horses in the event of a sudden alert.

The changing of the guard is carried out by the sentries themselves without a noncommissioned officer. Every guard who reports for sentry duty receives instructions and paroles (passwords) for that day from the commander of the border zastava, after an examination of his knowledge of border duties. After release from duty every sentry reports to the commander of the border zastava the transfer of duties to his successor and about the tour of duty itself (what happened of importance, and what he heard and saw).

Paroles (passwords) used at the border zastavas are threefold: a) in words, b) ciphers, and c) special.

A parole in words is not new and is like that used in the pre-revolutionary Russian Army. It consists of two words: the parole and the answer. The name of a city is usually used as the parole; and as the reply, the name of various weapons, the first letter of which is the same as that of the parole, e.g., Moscow - Muschka, Kiev - Kurok, Pavlograd - Pistol, etc.

The parole for every day and the reply is fixed by the local military post commander and is secretly given to all military detachments under his command, among them to the border zastava commander. It is used for mutual recognition among the guards of the frontier and the soldiers of the military field forces, who often train during the day and at night within the frontier zone and may appear along the border.

A parole in ciphers, like the parole in words, consists of two two-cipher numbers. As the parole one one- or two-digit number is used and as the reply two one- or two-digit numbers are used, the sum of which is equal to the one- or two-digit number which is the parole. For example: parole - "23", reply - "10 + 13", or: parole - "15" and reply - "7 + 8", or: parole - "8" and reply - "5 + 3". The plus sign is not given when actually used.

The parole and reply are useful even if they are overheard by an unauthorized individual, even a member of the military, as it is difficult for that individual to learn the combination of digits making up the parole and reply because in using a parole the reply may be either a two- or a one-digit number, the sum of which is equal to the parole, which is known only by authorized personnel. The constituent numbers of the parole are not the same as those of the reply.

A parole in words or in ciphers is changed every day.

A special parole is determined by means of the simplest of signs agreed upon, e.g., three.... on the pouch, or two.... on the rifle.... etc. This parole is only used in special circumstances by the secret observers and sentries or by those persons who control their service where speaking is prohibited or is impossible. It usually occurs when, on the basis of intelligence information, an ambush is planned to catch an important smuggler or foreign agent who is planning to cross the border.

This parole is fixed by the border zastava commander and is changed very often.

An ambush of foreign agents or smugglers, who are also considered agents, evokes special interest on the part of the guards themselves. The agents may carry with them such precious things as medicines (cocaine, morphine, opium, etc.), American or other foreign currency, golden coins and objects, which they need for exchange into the Soviet currency inside the Soviet Union. Such a catch results in a financial reward, or a two weeks' leave for the guards who carried out the arrest.

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Except for the paroles and replies mentioned above, cipher cryptonyms are used for telephone calls or radio telegrams between the commander of the border zastava and his superiors in the border service and the field army. For instance:

- a. "30" means the Central Commutation Station
- b. "31" means the Commander of the Border Otryad
- c. "10" means the Chief of Staff of the Border Otryad
- d. "15" means the Commander of the Border Zastava in the village of Podoyma.

Calling a station sounds like this: "Thirty, give me thirty-one. Who is calling? Here is ten, fifteen speaking." The cipher cryptonyms are changed once a month or so.

The lists of the paroles and cryptonyms are considered very secret. They are kept by the commander of the border zastava personally, and the frontier functionaries who receive them for official use are not authorized to hand them over to unauthorized persons.

Every border zastava has telephone connection with the border komandatura and with the neighboring border zastavas. In some cases mounted messengers are used for contact among them.

Along the border sector of the zastava contact with sentries and patrols is maintained only by messengers, mounted or on foot. If, however, the commander of the border zastava has to carry out an important plan or a task ordered from above (receiving Soviet agents from the neighboring country or dispatching them abroad) a special telephone line is built between his headquarters and the sentry post involved.

The commander of the border zastava may use radio contact but only that of the border komandatura.

Such is the organization of the protecting service in the sector of a border zastava. But that is not yet the full picture.

VI. Protective Measures in Populated Areas

Besides the protection of the frontier by the border zastavas, the MVD also applies special measures to the population residing in frontier populated areas (cities, towns, and villages).

Every shift of the Soviet frontier to a new line has a most sensitive effect upon the local population because of the protective measures of the MVD. Individuals or all inhabitants of populated frontier areas who in the opinion of the MVD are not loyal enough are deported deep into Soviet territory. Those who are allowed to remain by the "grace" of the MVD are under steady and strict surveillance by the troops of frontier services. Free movement of the population is impossible. All persons who arrive in the frontier zone, either as employees or on leave from other places, are obliged to register personally: a) with the border komandatura to which the populated area belongs, and b) with the local Soviet offices; in villages with the "sibirada" (village council), in towns with the "raispolk" (Raion Executive Committee), and in cities with the "gorsovet" (city council).

At the registration every newly arrived person presents his passport and the document defining the purpose of arrival (document of transfer or document issued by the MVD about the former residence; in case the latter is not available, a stamp from the MVD with the date and signature of the officer of the passport desk of the MVD is sufficient). Without carrying out these

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formalities and without an excellent knowledge of frontier regulations and the personal acquaintance with an official of the border zastava it is almost impossible to stay in the villages, towns, or cities of the frontier zone.

Leaving the frontier area requires again checking out with offices mentioned. Persons who avoid these formalities are searched for by the MVD and they have to appear in court. The controls on railroads and waterways within the frontier zone or on roads 15 to 20 km from the border, where from time to time mounted patrols check all persons who go from the border into the interior of the zone, are carried out by organs of the Internal Troops of the MVD.

In villages situated along river banks which are the border line, the selsoyets (village councils) check for newcomers every day and immediately inform the commander of the nearest border zastava about them. He examines this information with the aid of secret agents.

Places along the riverside allotted to the local population for bathing are fenced in by wire and are under the steady surveillance of a sentry who carefully watches that nobody crosses the frontier line of the river, which is marked by special signs (barrels).

Where the local population consists of fishermen and they have fishing boats on the river, special agents from among the fishermen are hired by the MVD to watch their villages and secretly inform the commander of the border zastava about those who lent a boat to somebody or those who crossed the river with somebody.

If the villagers have their land across the river-frontier which is included in Soviet kolkhoz farms or vineyards as, e.g., on the Dnestr River, then every day the villagers must ask for passes which contain the signature and seal of the commander of the border zastava and after completing their work they must turn in the pass.

It must be mentioned that, although the frontier was moved further west after the war, the Dnestr River is still considered as frontier. Therefore, watching population movement from west to east is carried out at both the new frontier line and the Dnestr River. All the methods and measures mentioned above allow the MVD and their border zastavas to carry out their protection duties very well and make the frontiers impenetrable.

25X1A 1. [REDACTED] Comment. Various sources have reported that since May 1950 the Border Troops and the Internal Troops, as well as several others, have been transferred to the MGB. However, the personnel and respective functions of each remain the same.

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